

CHAPTER - VI

GHARABAHER BY P. K. ATRE

- VI.1 Introduction of the play.
- VI.2 Plot of Gharabaher.
- VI.3 Social Problems and Ideas in the play.
- VI.4 Weaknesses in Gharabaher.

.....ooooOoooo.....

CHAPTER - VI

GHARABAHER BY P. K. ATRE

VI.1 INTRODUCTION OF THE PLAY :

P.K. Atre wrote घराबाहेर (Gharabaaher) in 1934. It appeared immediately after साष्टांग नमस्कार (Sastang Namaskar). In Gharabaaher Atre presents a social and moral problem which deals with a life of educated middle-class Hindu woman. It was an attempt in a new direction. The story of the play deals with Nirmala's life. Nirmala, is a modern woman. She is educated and she expects something from her husband. In the preface of जग काय म्हणेल (Jag Kaya Mhanel) Atre writes, " आर्थिक स्वातंत्र्यासाठी धडपडणा-या हिन्दू स्त्रीच्या जीवनाचे चित्र मी घराबाहेर मध्ये रंगविण्यास सुरवात केली आहे. तो माझा पहिला प्रयत्न होता.पुढे उद्याच्या संसारात त्या चित्राचे हृदय - भेदक स्वप्न मी अधिक दैर्घ्याने आणि आवेगाने रंगविले ते पुष्कळाना आवडले. तथापि माझ्या मनाचे मात्र त्यामुळे समाधान झाले नव्हते. म्हणून इतक्या वर्षांनी पुन्हा लेखणी हातात धरताच तेच अपुरे राहिलेले चित्र मनाप्रमाणे या नाटकामध्ये पुरे करावयाचे मी ठरविले".¹

(In Gharabaaher I have started to depict the character of a woman who struggles for economical freedom. It was my first attempt... In Udyacha Sansar I have painted the same painful and heart-breaking picture with great courage. People liked it. But I was not truly satisfied. So after such a lapse of time when I took pen in my hand, I am doing the same.)

Atre was not a philosopher but he realises the status

of Hindu women in contemporary society. He is aware of the fact that a role of woman in Hindu society is important as a mother and not as a wife. Hindu woman is duty bound. He considers all these facts when he writes Gharabahr.

Atre presents Nirmala as a heroine of this play. Though her character he wants to attack the man-made rules and male-domination in the society. Here he presents Nirmala as a typical and ideal Hindu woman who lives under the domination of her husband and where she suffers a lot. After ten years, Nirmala realises the fact and decides to leave her husband and son. When she does it again she comes in difficulty and new conflict starts in her mind. Finally she accepts to join her family on the ground of love for her son. Hence Gharabahr is a representation of day-to-day Hindu life. Hence though the title of the play is Gharabahr the purpose of the play is different. Here Atre maintains the concept of Hindu family and traditional Hindu woman.

VI.2 PLOT OF GHARABAHER :

Drama opens with a talk between Abasaheb and Nageshwar. Abasaheb look anxious and angry. Nageshwar starts speaking. He speaks about Nirmala and her bad character and objectionable behaviour with Padmanabh. By this talk - Nageshwar inflames Abasaheb's anger. He makes various charges against Nirmala. Nageshwar gives free confession of his misconduct in youth. He makes charge against Nirmala that she has written love letters to Padmanabh. These letters are shabby and unreadable. Nageshwar requests Abasaheb politely to consider all these charges and find

out whether there is any truth in it. Abasaheb in angry mood calls Nilkanth, his son. He comes out and Abasaheb gives him an idea of their talk in brief. Nageshwar gives a bundle of papers (letters) to Nilkanth and asks him to read them by which he would come to know about his 'Vahini' in details. Abasaheb orders him to burn them immediately and suggests to him to destroy the evidence of Nirmala's misconduct. He calls out Shaunak. Shaunak comes and asks why he was called. Abasaheb explains the content of their talk and speaks about his final decision. He explains to him that he had decided to drive Nirmala out of the house.

Shaunak becomes restless and asks Abasaheb what was the reason for taking such an unexpected discision without his consent. Abasaheb explains the cause in vague terms and says that Nirmala met Padmanabh often times and she had developed immoral relations with him by which reputation of the family is bismirched. Finally Shaunak accepts the plan decided uppn by his father and brother. Furious Nirmala comes out and asks Shaunak to stop. Nirmala blames him and says that he is shriking his responsibility. Because of his blindness towards his father he is not in a position to decide what is wrong and what is right.

Now Nirmala is bold. She gathers courage and tries to expose Abasaheb's hypocrisy. Now she decides to rebel against all. Nirmala speaks boldly and says that during the previous ten years she had suffered a great deal in that house. Though she was a daughter-in-law, still she had strength enough to protect herself. She tries to explain the situation and says that there was

no proof of my misconduct and it is wrong to accuse me needlessly. Here enters Padmanabh and tries to explain the sacred and noble character of Nirmala. He tells that he had been considering her as his sister and nothing else. I have developed my relations as brother and sister and how could he behave like a devil with her as you think and charge. Here he explains the fact of letters and the novel he has written. He makes a charge that Nageshwar and his son might have stolen the handscript of the novel. All this is vain. Shaunak too, is unable to give protection to Nirmala. Bold and furious Nirmala says that I am not a thing of pity and I will not bow my head against this evil. She becomes rebellious and plucks her Mangalsutra and throws it towards Abasheh.

" सुवासीनीच्या संसारातून एकदा उठल्यानंतर हा सौभाग्य अलंकार अंगावर बाळगून त्याची विटंबना कशात करायला पाहिजे ? देवा ब्राम्हणासमक्ष तुम्ही माझ्या गळ्यात बांधलेला हा गुलामीगरोचा गळ्यास मी माझ्या स्वतःच्या हाताने तोडते. "

Shaunak tries to control Nirmala. Shaunak asks her "oh ! Nirmala dear, where will you go ? Explain where ?" Nirmala explains boldly Gharabaher, out of the house.

Second act of the play describes the pitiful condition of Minakshi, a widow who lives in the house of Bhaiyasaheb. He is a well known lawyer and a member of Municipality. He seems to be gently outwardly but really is wicked and have evil intentions in mind about women. Minakshi is one of the victimes of this man. Nirmala lives with Minakshi and tries to find some solace in her company. Nirmala explains her mental condition and her inability to decide what is to be done. Bhaiyasaheb enters and speaks

with Nirmala. When they are speaking Padmanabh enters and asks permission to meet Nirmala. Nirmala, explains her sorrowful condition to Padmanabh. In his speeck Padmanabh blames Hinduism and Hindu culture. He explains "If there is an advertisement in other country about Hindu society it would be intended. Only for the better ment of Hindu males and their lives". He talks on present condition of Hindu women her slavery and the treatment given to her. At the same he warns Nirmala not to stay with Bhaiyasaheb. He is nothing but on evil incarnation a serpent. Nirmala does not agree with the idea and ~~sa~~ not to paralise me and my mind by your vain affections. Padmanabh explains the cause of his arrival to Bhaiyasaheb. He says ; Young man just wait. I don't want to hurt your feelings. Only I can say that I have protected Nirmala and provided her a shelter not to oblige he r but as a matter of duty, humanity compels me to do so. Now Bhaiyasheb starts speaking about love, man-woman relationship and sympathy. When Bhaiyasaheb goes away Nilkanth her brother-in-law enters. Nirmala is shocked. Nilkanth requests her to \$forgive him about his past guilt. He requests her not to stay in this house. He says that he is ready to take all responsibility and ready to provide her mony shelter and protection. Further he refers to the views of the people. He says that people call her mistresses of Bhaiyasaheb. When she lisens this comment she loses her mental temper. She says furiously 'go away other-wise I will bite your throat and kill you'. Nilkanth goes away. Nirmala asks Shankar to close the gate and keep watch on her.

Third Act of the play opens in Bhaiyasaheb's house. Bhaiyasaheb is discussing with Nirmala. He explains that Shaunak had come to meet her and he wanted to speak with her. At first Nirmala refuses to talk with him. Here enters Shaunak. Nirmala does not utter a single word. Nirmala demands marriage invitation card from him. Shaunak appeals to her not to be so heartless. Finally he requests her to come back and join the family at least for the sake of her son. He says I know well the wrong which I have done to you but now I request you to forgive me for it. Nirmala is not in a mood to forgive. She disdains the concept of house and asks "House, whose house". and gives her frank opinion about Hindu house. Shaunak assures her that he is not taking her back in the hell of his father's house. He assures to create a new house 'Let us create a new house, entirely ours, a heaven on the earth.'

Now Nirmala is in two minds. It seems very difficult for her to join the family. She asks him what people will call, if I will be there in your house your entire dream of happiness will shatter to pieces because of my sin. Shaunak says, you are really an embodiment of piety. Nirmala explains her opinion and philosophy of life and speaks about qualities which she expects from him. And explains the details of the wrong committed by her father-in-law. when Shaunak listens to them he is shocked. Now action of the play takes a turn. Padmanabh meets her and speaks about Ashok her son. He explains to her the real duty of woman. He says Indian woman stands as a mother first and wife afterwards. Finally she decides to re-unite with her husband and house.

VI.3 SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND IDEAS IN THE PLAY :

Atre, though generally interested in come dies and light plays, in some of his plays he is more interested in social problems and life of women and their position in this society. The concept of Hindu family and a traditional Hindu woman and her sentiments is the centre of his problem plays. तो मी नष्टेच, ज्याचा संसार, लग्नाची बेडी, जग काय म्हणेल and घराबाहेर concentrate on these problems. Atre selects problems which are serious and broad-based. These are not temporary problems. The woman in present society lives in a traditional trap of religion and customs and has to face various problems. Her husband treats her as his possession or property and treats her always subordinate to him. Atre considers it as the subject of his plays and tries to find out some ways for the betterment of woman's life.

Hindu woman always suffers from her age-old problems. Nirmala is the type of such woman who is in a dilemma, whether to keep to the traditional ways and old values or to revolt against these and to start a new way of life. The idea of woman's rebellion against traditional values was shocking to contemporary Hindu society. Nirmala tries to rebel against established principles and leaves her house, husband child and all relations. Shaunak her husband does not prove to be the man she had expected. It explains the true foundation of Indian marriage and man-woman relationship.

Atre is the true product of Hindu mind and Hindu philosophy. Though he expects that husband should look upon woman as

man's equal and treat her as a living human being, with her own mind, feelings, passions and emotions having her separate identity. Still he does not want Nirmala to give up all morals and traditions. Hence he brings Nirmala back and reunite her with her house not as a wife but as a mother. Atre makes an appeal to her motherhood. Hence though the title of the play is Gharabahr its real intention is to bring Nirmala back. Atre as a true product of Indian society, realises the fact that Nirmala will not come back if there is no concrete reason. So when Atre speaks about Nirmala's emancipation and her true development and about social progress he does not violate Indian culture and woman's true cause as her motherhood. As a moralist and social thinker, Atre wishes to solve the problem and re-unites her and upholds the Indian culture.

Gharabahr is a modern problem play. Nirmala is an educated woman and she expects something from her husband. Nirmala symbolises an awakening on the part of the modern woman. Nirmala, after ten years sufferings realises that her husband is unable to protect her. He has no ability to protect her from the clutches of her father-in-law and brother-in-law, who tries to violate her. Nirmala becomes angry and refuses to stay with Shaunak who refuses to shoulder the responsibilities.

But when she comes out of her house she was found herself in strange situations. People, having traditional faith and beliefs start criticising her which she can't tolerate. The characters of Nirmala, Shaunak, Bhaiyashaheb and Minakshi appear to be real throughout the play. The things that happen to them

are things that happen to us.

VI.4 WEAKNESSES IN GHARABAHER :

Critics have detected certain weaknesses in the play. Atre creates Nirmala, bold and rebellious woman, who plucks her 'Mangalsutra' and goes out of her house at the begining of the play. When she realises the shortcomings of her husband, she decides to go out of the house. But Atre thinks it necessary to bring her back. He adds an impossible event in the play. Nirmala discloses the secret of Bhaiyasaheb's behaviour after such a long time. It is not logical and seems impossible. The problem is that why Nirmala remained in the house under the pressure of fear, why does't she explain it to Shaunak. About this charge Dr.D.R. Gokhale writes in his book Atre and Marathi Theatre "सासरा आणि दोर यांनी तीच्या पातत्रत्यावर घाला घालण्याचे जे प्रसंग आणले ते तिने आधीच शौनकाला का सांगितले नाहीत याचा निर्मलेने केलेला खुलासा, निर्मला एक मानी, त्यागी व सोपीक वृत्तीची महाराष्ट्रीयन हिन्दू स्त्री आहे याची आठवण ठेवली तर हे मान्य करून तिने ते आधीच का सांगितले नाही असे आपण पुन्हा विचारणारे नाही. "2

(If we accept Nirmala as a type of Maharashtrian Hindu woman, we can't ask why she has not revealed her humiliation by father-in-law and brother in law at the begining.)

Nirmala's exit is of Shaunak's weakness. Shaunaka's reaction after the disclosure of the secret is in keeping with male nature. Atre has created Nirmala's character keeping certain things in his mind. Hindu culture, tradition and convictions are

maintained through the praise of motherhood. So Nirmala's utterance "I will go in Hell to meet my child" represents the typical Hindu woman in her.

Prof. S.N. Banhatti remarks " त्यात सामाजिक हेतू प्रधान असला तरी ती वास्तव प्रधान आहेत असे म्हणत नाही." ³

((Gharabher) contains a social sense but it does not seem cominicing.)

Prof. M.K. Deshpande writes " घराबाहेर पडलेली निर्मला ज्या अपत्यप्रेमाच्या पाशांमुळे घरी परत येते त्याचा धागा कथानकात प्रारंभापासून गुंफण्याचा मार्मिकपणा अत्र्यांनी दाखविलेला नाही." ⁴

(Atre did not take the precaution of providing a hint of Nirmala's love of her child which is to bring her back to the house she has abandoned.)

Through Pratibha, in 1935 S.K. Khandekar and Muktabai Lele has criticed the same view.

.....oooOooo.....

REFERENCES

1. Atre P. K. - Jag Kai Mhanel.
(Parchure Publication Bombay-4) 1980.
P.No. 5
2. Gomkale D.R. - Atre and Marathi Theatre
(Parchure Publication, 1962)
P.No. 156
3. Dr. Dhande Chandrakant - Marathi Natya Samikshecha Vikas.
(Parimal Prakashan, 1979)
P.No. 312
4. Dr. Nasirabadkar L.R. - Acharya Atre Sahitya Darshan
(M.V. Phadake and company, Kolhapur, 1976)
P.No. 97

-----0000000-----